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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/29): ARAB PEACE INITIATIVE -  
"LAST UNILATERAL CONCESSION"

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Main Stories:  
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Al Quds leads with news of "unprecedented floods" in Gaza and all front pages run prominent photos of flooded streets. Reporting notes damage to roads and homes, making "many" families homeless. Gazans blame the Israeli blockade for the lack of machinery needed to combat flooding, papers report. In other Gaza news, a "Free Gaza" movement ship is expected to set sail from Cyprus for Gaza on October 29, carrying foreign, Israeli and Palestinian nationals calling for a lifting of the Israeli "siege" on the Strip. Unlike the first boat that reached Gaza in August this year, Israeli authorities have vowed to block the entry to Gaza of this second "Free Gaza" boat, according to reporting.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with news about early Israeli elections in February 2009. The papers quote Israeli Minister of Interior Sheetrit and Minister of National Infrastructures Ben Eliazer calling for a halt to peace negotiations with the Palestinians and Syria. The three papers also report calls made by British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Bill Rammell, that Israel halt settlement activities.

All papers run highlighted stories on inside pages about the October 28 cornerstone laying by Consul General Walles, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad and USAID Director Sumka for a new library in the West Bank town of Beit Jala. Accompanied by photos of the principals, the papers run lengthy comments by Walles reiterating U.S. support for the two-state solution and continued U.S. commitment to the peace process after U.S. presidential elections. In separate reporting, Al Quds highlights a second October 29 Consulate activity on an inside page: Public Affairs Officer Schweitzer-Bluhm gave a presentation on U.S. elections via digital video conference with the American Corner at Al Azhar

University in Gaza.

The three papers front-page statements by Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad from an October 28 meeting with police commanders in the West Bank city of Hebron stating, "We are about to launch a national project to end the occupation and establish an independent state. What we are [doing] right now is laying the foundations of a state through the establishment of strong and effective institutions."

Al Ayyam's front page reports that an Israeli security officer killed a Palestinian youth in Beit Shemen in Israel. Quoting the Arab48 website, the paper says that the officer fired at three Palestinians, "who seemed to be Arabs" because he thought they wanted to break into his house.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Al Quds editorial opines under the title, "A political crisis for Israel or the peace process?" (10/29): "The internal Israeli crisis... [is] closely related to the peace process and negotiations with Palestinians... [Israeli Kadima Party leader] Livni's failure to form a coalition government proves that underlying the Israeli political crisis are extremist, radical positions regarding the peace process. This connection will continue until the majority of Israelis recognize that peace and coexistence can only be realized by ending the occupation, settlement activities and establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital."

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2) Regular columnist Hani Habib writes in Al Ayyam under the title, "The Arab peace initiative... the return of the lost son" (10/29): "There is a proposal ready for implementation. Anyone discussing peace should start implementing instead of discussing amendments or negotiating articles here and there... [the Arab states] should be firm in their proposal, [rejecting] any amendments, so that the Arab initiative becomes the last unilateral concession necessary to achieve peace."

Wallles